

# **Testimony of Jackie Pinckney-Hackett**

## **Committee on Government Reform**

### **May 9, 2003**

Good afternoon Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee on Government Reform.

My name is Jackie Pinckney-Hackett and I am the PTA President at Jefferson JHS in Washington, DC. I am also a parent of two sons who attend DC Public Schools--Jefferson JHS and School Without Walls SHS. Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on school choice. I would like to begin by sharing a very brief article I wrote on the liberal Out-of-Boundary process in the District.

### **Read Article--A Day to Remember**

There are over 6,000 parents in the District who want and need a school choice program. The condition of D.C. Public Schools is not secret. Our children should not be left to suffer while we attempt to improve academic performance in DC Public Schools.

This School Choice Program must be a true and equal choice opportunity not to mention fully funded. Each choice should offer the student an excellent academic opportunity. Therefore, it may be necessary to enhance all school choices to the same performance level. It may also mean providing scholarships in the amount of \$10, 000 per student. To just give money for scholarships is not enough. Keep in mind there are not a sufficient number of slots in private schools to accommodate 6,000 plus students. Money is also needed to improve public and public charter schools.

In closing, I encourage federal legislation to address educational issues in the District with a School Choice Program that the nation can be proud of.

Thank you.

## **A Day to Remember**

Wednesday, March 19, 2003 will be a day to remember for all Americans. It is the day we began war to disarm Iraq--“Operation Iraqi Freedom”. And for many District parents it was the day the lottery was held by DCPS for out-of-boundary placements--“Operation School Choice”. Both operations contained a “shock and awe” component. For Iraq the “shock and awe” was delayed a day or two, however, for the District parents it had an immediate impact. You see, the DCPS school system reported receiving more than 6,000 applications for out-of-boundary placements and having about 5,254 slots available across the city. That’s phase one of the “shock and awe” campaign, which leads parents to believe they have a school choice. The military refers to this as psychological warfare. Phase two: lottery results--they drop the bomb and your school choice is decapitated. Shocked??? Awe!!!

Take a look at the Middle/Junior High School chart below. The schools with the available seats such as Kramer, Sousa, Eliot and Shaw are not necessarily the schools of choice. Together those

schools have 445 available seats, received 81 applications and accepted 80 applications. And the schools that are believed to be the premier/cream of the crop schools such as Hardy, Stuart-Hobson, Deal, Hine, Francis and Jefferson had a total of 270 available seats, received a total of 2,224 applications and only accepted 239 applications.

### **Middle/Junior High School**

<b>School</b>	<b>Available Seats</b>	<b># of Applicants Rec'd</b>	<b># of Applicants Accepted</b>
Hardy MS	25	367	25
Kramer MS	120	4	3
Sousa MS	60	15	15
Stuart-Hobson MS	10	283	10
Deal JHS	10	532	10
Eliot JHS	120	45	45
Francis JHS	90	170	74
Hine JHS	60	330	55
Jefferson JHS	75	542	75
Shaw JHS	145	17	17

And it gets worse at the Senior High School level. In fact, the premier schools--Banneker, School Without Walls, Ellington, and M.M. Washington are exempt from the Out-of-Boundary process. Those schools have an entrance exam and only accept the best. And most of the schools with the available seats--Anacostia,

Ballou, Coolidge, Eastern and Woodson just happen to be identified as “low performing” schools under the No Child Left Behind Act. Spingarn had 24 seats available and accepted all 9 of the applications submitted. Dunbar had 140 available seats, received 191 applications and accepted 96 applications. I guess you are wondering why they did not accept 140 applications. Well, there were a limited number of seats for certain grade levels.

### Senior High Schools

School	Available Seats	# of Applicants Rec'd	# of Applicants Accepted
Anacostia SHS	80	7	7
Ballou SHS	220	3	3
Cardoza	0	16	0
Dunbar SHS	140	191	96
Eastern SHS	275	152	148
Roosevelt SHS	35	29	23
Spingarn SHS	24	9	9
Wilson SHS	0	520	0
Woodson SHS	125	59	57

Well, I guess parents can apply for public charter schools. Or at least add their names to the waiting list. Wouldn't it be nice to offer parents another option? Perhaps a voucher, a certificate or

scholarship to allow parents to place their children in a school that provides a quality education. I support public schools, public charter schools and private schools. Most importantly I support children receiving a quality education.

Parents should not have to gamble with their children's education. Either you have school choice or you don't. District parents do not have a choice. A lottery is not a choice! It's a fat chance. It appears that "Operation School Choice" was not a success and decapitated thousands of educations. Mission failed! I hope and pray that "Operation Iraqi Freedom" has better luck and fewer casualties. We know they have better funding.